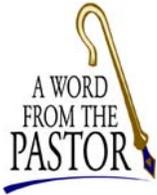


The Messenger

A newsletter of the people of First Lutheran Church, Waltham

The First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Waltham
The Rev. Thomas E. Maehl, Pastor
www.firstlutheranwaltham.org

January/February 2022
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Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord. (Psalm 31:24)

This is hard.

We have entered our third year dealing with the COVID pandemic. Each one of us is facing uncertainty and loss in our own way. For me, the good and right decision to temporarily suspend in-person worship through January was a big loss; as a central part of my grounding is the community that gathers on Sunday morning. However, I have other ways of staying grounded; in particular the roughly two hours each morning between 6:30 and 8:30 am when I sit with my coffee, dog, Bible, books, and engage in silence, prayer, reading, and reflection. This morning ritual has been essential to my continuing to endure with faith, hope, and love in the midst of all the uncertainty.

How do you stay grounded? Walks, silence, meditation, music, art, prayer? Something else?

Part of the challenge is that we can sense some things are changing for good; life will never be the same. At the same time, we don't know yet what the new will look like. We are in a time of waiting. Waiting takes patience. Fears arise, and so waiting takes courage. Waiting is hard.

There are two temptations in this in-between time (the time between what has been and what shall be). The first temptation is to try to recreate the old ways at any cost. The old ways after all are what carried us in the past, gave life rhythm and meaning. Without rhythm and meaning we may end up scared for our own survival. The second temptation is to jump to potential new ways and patterns without sitting long enough in the waiting time, the gestation time, the listening time.

In her book, *Crises Leadership*, Margaret Benefiel offers the wisdom that in this time of waiting the wise path is to stay grounded, to practice self care, AND in the time of waiting to keep asking the questions, *Who are we called to be in the world, and how are we called to serve?* She goes on to say that if our focus becomes survival, we may dry up creatively. If on the other hand, we entrust our lives to God (letting go of the question of survival) and focus on questions that draw us outward, new paths might more easily emerge.

Be Strong! Remember God is with us. May God show us creative and meaningful ways forward.

Faithfully, Pastor Maehl

Virtual Meeting of the Congregation

Sunday, January 30, 2022
11:30 am

(following virtual worship)

Due to the pandemic, we will be holding our annual meeting via zoom (a link will be shared one week prior). At this meeting we will adopt a budget for 2022 and receive written annual reports from the pastor, president and committee chairs. We will hold elections for church council and other leadership positions.

The proposed budget and all other reports will be sent via email at least one week prior; if you would like hard copies, please contact the church office.

We ask members to please make an effort to attend.

Nurturing Faith

Camp Calumet Retreat

Our annual congregational retreat is scheduled for the weekend of February 25-27. We are going to wait until the first week of February to determine, (looking at COVID statistics and discerning in collaboration with the reopening team), about whether or not we will go forward with this.

If the COVID surge has subsided somewhat and we do choose to go, here are some things we expect:

- We will follow the camp rules. Currently, Calumet has a policy that masks are worn in all common areas, with the exception of the dining hall when seated at one's table. When groups are in lounges or meeting rooms, it is up to each group to determine their own practice with or without masks.
- As we did with the fall retreat, we will ask participants to take a home COVID test within 24 hours of leaving for the retreat.

In the meantime here's how you might be of help. If you think you *might* be attending please let Pastor Maehl know. It would be helpful to have some idea of how many people are considering this. Thank you.

Justice and Service Team Update

We cooked a meal for guests at the Community Day center on December 15 and are planning on doing so again on January 19. If any would like to help, please contact Emily Citrone, Signe Johns, or Pastor Maehl.

We are also collecting winter coats, hats, gloves, and socks to share with others through Healthy Waltham. If you have items to share, please bring to church by January 23

Sabbatical Update

Having delayed a year due to the pandemic, I will be taking a sabbatical this year. Here are a few details:

- My last Sunday in worship will be May 1.
- On May 2-5 my sabbatical begins with a four day workshop/retreat led by Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation (the conclusion of a program I began in 2019)
- At the center of my time away will be, hopefully, a several week bicycle trip along the Rhine River in Europe with my wife Meg. This will not be part of a tour, but we are planning our own itinerary, packing lightly and staying in simple accommodations.
- Along with rest, prayer, exercise, and reconnecting with extended family and old friends I also hope to engage in a good deal of writing.
- My return is planned for Monday, August 22.

And here are a few more notes about the importance and purpose of this sabbatical:

- My practice of a sabbatical roughly every seven years, follows a Biblical pattern (see Leviticus 25).
- The ultimate purpose is that through rest, prayer, travel, study, reflection, play, time alone and time with family and friends, I might experience renewal: spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically.
- I view my ministry at First Lutheran as having four quarters, each quarter ending with a sabbatical. I began in 1999, had sabbaticals in 2007 and 2014. This next sabbatical will mark the end of my 3rd quarter, and hopefully will spiritually prepare me for my 4th.

I am convinced that sabbaticals are essential to my ability to continue to serve as pastor in the same place for long time, and I am deeply grateful for the congregation's support.

Faithfully, Pastor Maehl

Serving Others



From the Vicar

I love listening to podcasts. Just about every morning I take a walk exploring Prospect Hill with my dog Thabo and I listen to a podcast. One of my absolute favorites is *We Can Do Hard Things*, with Glennon Doyle, her wife Abby Wambach, and her sister Amanda Doyle.

At the beginning of the new year, the trio held a conversation about the problem of the common cultural mantra of: 'New Year, New You.' At New Year's, we are bombarded with advertisements promoting the ways in which we "should" eat healthier, workout more, take better care of ourselves, be a better person, and the list could go on. However, in response to this mantra and advertisements, Glennon Doyle stated, "There is no premise that you have to accept that who you are wasn't good enough in the first place."

Her response felt like the epitome of grace: you are already enough. There is nothing new we need to do in 2022 in order to be good enough. There is nothing new we need to do in 2022 in order to receive God's love. We are good enough just as we are, whether it is in 2021 or 2022. This gift of grace is given to us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It is through Jesus' life, that we have all received grace upon grace (John 1:16).

2022 has met us with a rocky start, from the Omicron variant to the impacts of climate change. But as we continue to journey through the wilderness, may we be reminded Jesus meets us here with grace upon grace. Grace and love will continue to abound as we just continue to journey through each day, one day at a time.

Rather than sticking to the mantra, 'New Year, New You,' maybe together we can embrace, 'New Year, More Grace.'

Peace, Vicar Samantha

Property Committee Update

We continue to work on mold remediation. We hired a contractor who has removed the lower 37 inches of wallboard in all of the Sunday school rooms. The interior walls have been treated and painted with a protective coating. Here's a picture:



Over the next few weeks new wallboard and plaster will be installed, with a chair rail at the intersection of the old and new. After that new flooring will be installed.

We are also are now securing bids for replacing the roof over the offices, as this has been the source of mold upstairs. Our thanks for all who have made contributions to the Capital Improvement Fund allowing us to tackle this much needed work.



Thanks for Sharing

Thanks to all who contributed food, clothing, books, McDonalds and Dunkin Donuts gift cards, and Charlie cards in December. The gift cards were given to the leaders of Chaplains on the Way and the books were shared through the Waltham Diaper Depot.

Thanks also to all who made contributions to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund. Over the past year this money has been used to help support our neighbors with food, utility payments, rent subsidies, funeral and health care expenses, and more.

Serving Others

Intern Update

I (Pastor Maehl) asked Vicar Samantha to describe how her two year internship model works. What follows is her response.

As we journey into this new year, I continue to find myself thinking, "Wow, I am so grateful I get to share in the ministry here and I can't imagine what it would be like if I had to leave in a few months!" I truly am so grateful that I have the opportunity to serve here at First Lutheran as Vicar not just for one year, but for two!

The reason I am able to be here for two years is thanks to the [2+2 Master of Divinity Program](http://www.capital.edu/academics/graduate-programs/trinity-lutheran-seminary/academics/master-of-divinity/) www.capital.edu/academics/graduate-programs/trinity-lutheran-seminary/academics/master-of-divinity/ at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, OH. How it works is for the first two years of seminary, students are full-time on campus. Then while on internship, students take a few online courses as well as some week-long intensive courses. Rather than going back to my seminary for a final year of schooling after one year of internship, I get to continue my final year on internship through the integration of these courses over two years.

In the Fall 2021 semester, I took an online course and a week-long intensive course. My online course was *Being Lutheran in America*, in which I learned about the history starting with how Lutheranism immigrated to the Americas through today. It was really interesting because I got to learn about the Lutherans who immigrated to New England and in particular the Swedish immigrants who founded First Lutheran! Then in October, I went back to Columbus for a week to take an intensive course, which was called the *Theology of Mission*. This meant that for a week I was in class 9am-5pm learning about mission, which was much more fun than it may sound! The course helped me reflect upon the ways we do mission together here at First and brainstorm some ways we could integrate new ways of doing mission as well.

Although I at times find some challenges in trying to figure out how to balance my schoolwork and work, I cannot imagine doing this learning in any other way. In some ways I have learned more in these classes while on internship because I am able to integrate the two. While in classes, I am able to learn contextually, meaning learning about what these topics mean for First Lutheran, what First Lutheran has to teach me about these topics, while integrating some of my learnings all at the same time.

This Spring 2021 semester I am taking two courses as well. Throughout the semester I will be taking *Feminist Biblical Interpretation* online. In February (15th-21st) I will take a week-long intensive course for *Advanced Preaching*. My hope is to integrate these courses in my teaching of confirmation this spring, preaching, and developing my leadership skills as a whole.

I truly can't imagine doing my internship any other way. I am so grateful what these past four months have brought us and am so excited for what the next year and a half may bring. Thank you for all your continued investment and support in my internship!

Peace, Vicar Samantha

Christmas Thanks

Offering two services on Christmas Eve proved to be a success with 50 to 60 at each service. Thanks to all who helped in preparing and decorating, in particular Norm and Mary Ellen Adams, Carol Hansen, LuAnn Kimker, Geri Nederhoff, Catherine and Peter Pinch, Ann Sjodin, Doris Speer, and Helen Yarbrough, Thanks also to all who assisted with A/V, reading lessons, and serving as assistant minister over our several services on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

Walking Together in God's Love

Prayer Concerns



Members of our First Lutheran Community: Sarah Allen; Jen Biter; Joan Clemens; Rosy Hebert; Eddie Hughes; June Jahrling; Erika Jerram; Steve Latter; Kerry Meaney; Kathryn McCowan; Cynthia Niiler, Joan and Jüri Niiler, Sandra Schwab.

Friends and Family: Adekemi (*friend of Sarah Rauhut*); Elaine Chan (*aunt of Catherine Pinch*); Emily Clemens (*niece of Joan Clemens*); Lavara Clemens (*mother of Joan Clemens*); Pam & Ken Cochran (COTW partner; Leslie Crowe (*friend of Connie and Jeanette Fagone*); Handel Dixon; Donna (*friend of Lu-ner (father of Kat Flinner)*); Norma Huisman (*aunt of Brad Nederhoff*); Ellen

Ann Kimker); Chuck Flin-
and Duke Katterheinrich (*LuAnn Kimker's parents*); Sylvia and Chris Lee-Thompson (*friend of Susan Pin-tus*); Peter Melanson (*brother-in-law of Matt and Erika Jerram*); Jason Mihalko (*friend of Matt Jerram*); Pappas family (*friends of Jennifer Lambert*); Sally Raymond (*Jen Biter's mom*); Susan Raymond ;(*sister-in-law to Jen & Bill Biter*); Stacey Reed (*sister of Penny Alexander*); Margarita Rivera (*friend of Rachel Nederhoff*); Margie and Roger Schroeder (*Curt Schroeder's parents*); Ann Sewich (*sister of Meg Maehl*); Doug Sewich (*brother-in-law of Meg and Tom Maehl*); Maria Silva (*aunt of Olga Jimenez*); Matthew Stanhope (*partner of Jane Danielson*); Wayne & Carol Sukow (*parents of Cathy Sukow*); Tara Waters (*family of Penny & Marquette Alexander*); Jim Wroe (*cousin of Carol Hansen*).

For those who grieve: the family and friends of Heather Budd (*friend of LuAnn Kimker*)

For our partners: Santuario Luterano, the Spanish speaking Lutheran congregation in Waltham, and for their interim leader: Rafaela Radcke. For other organizations we actively support: the Waltham Family School, the Waltham Community Day Center, Chaplains on the Way, the Waltham Alliance to Create Housing, Camp Calumet, and ELCA World Hunger.

If you would like to add/remove a name to/from the prayer list, please inform the church office.

First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Waltham

Ministers: The people of the congregation

Staff: The Rev. Thomas E. Maehl, Pastor
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Vicar Samantha DiBiaso, Intern
sdibiaso@capital.edu

Council: President: Ann Sjodin
Vice-President: LuAnn Kimker
Secretary: Julie Weeden
Treasurer: Susan Pintus

Holly Diaz
Sammy Kalisa
Jennifer Lambert
Beth Mellilo
Curt Schroeder

Worship:

Sundays:
8:15 am in person
10:30 am in person and Facebook Live

Visit us on the Web at:

www.firstlutheranwaltham.org



and on Facebook at First Lutheran
Church - Waltham, MA

Our Mission: We discern that Jesus Christ is calling us to:

Walk together in God's love: nurturing faith, doing justice, serving all.